

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MOSCOW 11003 131029Z

13

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TAGS: EAGR UR

SUBJECT: USSR GRAIN CROP

DEPARTMENT PASS AGRICULTURE FOR G&F DIVISION, FAS

REF: STATE 180582

1. SUMMARY: SOVIET UNION COULD CONCEIVABLY ANNOUNCE TOTAL GRAIN CROP VICINITY 200 MILLION TONS. BUT DISCOUNT FOR POST-HARVEST LOSSES OF SPRING GRAIN WOULD HAVE TO BE EXTRAORDINARILY LARGE BECAUSE OF HARVESTING DIFFICULTIES AND HIGH MOISTURE GRAIN. INCONCEIVABLE THAT WIDELY ACKNOWLEDGED DIFFICULTIES WITH RAIN AND WINDS IN ALMOST ALL SPRING GRAIN REGIONS FROM MID-JULY TO DATE WILL NOT TAKE HEAVY TOLL IN TERMS BOTH QUALITY AND STORABILITY. COMMENTS ON REFTEL FOLLOW. END COMMENT.

2. THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT WINTER GRAIN YIELDS WILL BE EXCEPTIONALLY HIGH AS INDICATED REFTEL. USDA ESTIMATE OF 25 CENTERS FOR WINTER WHEAT MAY BE TOO HIGH, BUT SHOULD BE IN BALL PARK. ALTERNATIVE YIELD ESTIMATES WOULD NOT CHANGE PRODUCTION ESTIMATE WINTER GRAIN SUBSTANTIALLY.

3. CHARACTERIZATION OF WEATHER AND CROP CONDITIONS AS "ABOVE
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PAGE 02 MOSCOW 11003 131029Z

NORMAL" PUZZLING IN CONTEXT OF SPRING GRAINS (EXCEPT CORN).

ABOVE AVERAGE PRECIPITATION AND UNUSUALLY COOL WEATHER IN MOST SPRING GRAIN REGIONS SINCE MID-JULY DO NOT RPT NOT AUGUR WELL FOR SPRING GRAINS. AS IN VIRGIN LANDS LAST YEAR, MOST AREAS DESPERATELY NEEDED TWO WEEKS WARM, DRY WEATHER AFTER AUGUST 1 TO MATURE AND DRY GRAIN. THESE CONDITIONS DID NOT DEVELOP TO ANY APPRECIABLE EXTENT.

4. EVIDENCE CITED IN PARAGRAPH 2 REFTEL TO SUPPORT CONTENTION "RATHER SMALL LOSSES OF GRAIN FROM LODGING" NOT CONVINCING IF INTENDED TO RELATE TO SPRING GRAIN, AS IT APPEARS TO BY IMPLICATION. AS NOTED THIS PARAGRAPH, THIS RELATES ONLY TO "CERTAIN AREAS EARLIER THIS SEASON". SPECIFICALLY IT RELATES TO THE UKRAINE AND NORTH CAUCASUS, BOTH OVERWHELMINGLY WINTER GRAIN AREAS. WE AGREE WINTER GRAIN YIELDS EXCELLENT, BUT THIS NOT RELEVANT TO OUTCOME SPRING GRAIN CROP.

5. WE CONCUR WITH OBVIOUS STATEMENT PARAGRAPH 2 THAT "HARVESTING OF WET GRAIN MAY ACTUALLY INCREASE GROSS GRAIN PRODUCTION". BUT IT WILL ALSO MEAN EXTRAORDINARILY LARGE STORAGE LOSSES BECAUSE LACK OF ADEQUATE STORAGE AND DRYING FACILITIES.

6. WE AGREE WITH STATEMENT PARAGRAPH 3. A. REFTEL THAT "ABOVE NORMAL RAINFALL IN MUCH OF USSR FROM EARLY JULY THROUGH MID-AUGUST FAVORED DEVELOPMENT REPEAT DEVELOPMENT OF SPRING GRAINS ESPECIALLY FROM THE VOLGA EASTWARD"; BUT THIS NOT COMPLETE STORY. SAME WEATHER RETARDED MATURATION AND DRYING WHICH, IN ADDITION TO WELL PUBLICIZED WIDESPREAD LODGING, WILL RESULT IN HEAVY LOSSES. WE AGREE THAT CORN YIELDS WILL BE EXCELLENT, BUT ALSO WILL BE HIGH MOISTURE.

7. NO INFORMATION ON BRATISLAVA PRACDA ARTICLE CITED PARAGRAPH 3.B. REFTEL.

8. PROGRESS OF GRAIN HARVEST IN EARLY SEPTEMBER MAY BE "GENERALLY AHEAD OF PERFORMANCE OF RECENT REPEAT RECENT YEARS" AS STATED PARAGRAPH 3.C. REFTEL. BUT AS OF SEPT 3, 1973 AMOUNT OF GRAIN YET TO BE HARVESTED VIRTUALLY SAME AS ON SEPT 4, 1972-- 40 MILLION HECTARES. END COMMENTS.

9. WE TOO HAVE BEEN REVIEWING PROSPECTS FOR SPRING GRAIN CROP LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 MOSCOW 11003 131029Z

ON BASIS DEVIATION FROM NORMAL OF SOIL MOISTURE ON MAY 31, AND OF PRECIPITATION DURING JUNE-AUGUST. THESE WEATHER DATA SUGGEST THAT IT WOULD BE REASONABLE TO EXPECT SPRING GRAIN YIELDS TO BE ABOVE AVERAGE IN 16 REGIONS, ABOUT AVERAGE IN SEVEN REGIONS, AND BELOW AVERAGE IN FOUR. AT SAME TIME, LOSSES (FIELD AND STORAGE) CAN BE EXPECTED TO BE ABOVE AVERAGE IN 23 REGIONS -- INCLUDING SUBSTANTIALLY ABOVE AVERAGE IN 15 REGIONS (12 OF THESE ARE INCLUDED IN THE 16 REGIONS WITH ABOVE AVERAGE YIELDS). SUB-

NORMAL LOSSES ARE INDICATED FOR ONLY FOUR REGIONS: BALTICS, BELORUSSIA, WESTERN UKRAINE AND MOLDAVIA. IN BRIEF, THESE DATA SEEM TO SUPPORT THESES OF GOOD-EXCELLENT SPRING GRAIN CROP, BUT WITH MUCH GREATER LOSSES THAN USUAL.

10. WE CONCEDE THAT SOVIET UNION COULD CONCEIVABLY ANNOUNCE A

TOTAL GRAIN CROP OF APPROXIMATELY 200 MILLION TONS, BUT WE SUGGEST THAT USDA TASK FORCE MAY WISH TO CONSIDER AGAIN EFFECT OF WEATHER ON SPRING GRAINS AND ITS ULTIMATE EFFECT ON AMOUNT OF USEABLE GRAIN AVAILABLE FROM 1973 CROP.

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